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ABSTRACT

This workbook is a guide for work teams focused on one part of the hiring process--interviewing potential employees. The following sections are included: (1) an overview--what can be learned from interviews; (2) constructing effective interviews--identifying the skills and qualities needed; developing appropriate questions; and gathering useful and usable information; (3) stages of the interview--preparation, putting the potential employee at ease, exchange of information, closing the interview, and choosing the right candidate; and (4) guidelines---checklists and guidelines to evaluate the effectiveness of interviews. Forms and information sheets are included. (KC)

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WORKPLACE IMPROVEMENT OF NECESSARY SKILLS

WINS

TEAM INTERVIEWING

Instructor: Ramona Anderson

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OVERVIEW

In organizations using self-directed work teams, one of the most important jobs of the team is to interview potential employees for vacancies on the team. This job is often done in cooperation with other departments in the company such as the human resource department and managers. Finding the right employee is not simple. This activity may involve:

analyzing the position
creating a job description,
advertising the job,
screening applications,
checking references,
sometimes testing, and
interviewing potential candidates

In addition to direct costs, there is the investment of time and effort. If not done properly there is an even higher cost, hiring the wrong person.

This workbook is a learning tool and a guidebook focused on one part of the hiring process -- INTERVIEWING POTENTIAL EMPLOYEES BY THE WORK TEAM OR ITS REPRESENTATIVES. Included are the following:

An Overview	What you can "realistically" learn from interviews Problems and common errors made in interviewing
Constructing Effective Interviews	Identifying the skills & attributes needed Developing appropriate questions Gathering useful and useable information
Stages of the Interview	From preparation and putting the potential employee at ease, through the exchange of information, to closing the interview and choosing the right candidate.
Guidelines	Checklists and guidelines to evaluate the effectiveness of your interviews, an essential step to improving the effectiveness of your team interviews.

I. INTRODUCTION

Employees or potential employees are usually on their best behavior. So are we when we're interviewed. Do we really learn anything?

A. WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM INTERVIEWS

SOMETHING ABOUT THE EMPLOYEE'S PERSONALITY
WHAT MOTIVATES THE EMPLOYEE
THE EMPLOYEE'S WORK STYLE
SOMETHING ABOUT THE EMPLOYEE'S VALUES
TO SOME DEGREE THE EMPLOYEE'S HONESTY

WHAT WE CANNOT LEARN FROM INTERVIEWS

YOU CANNOT GUARANTEE THE DETECTION OF DISHONESTY
YOU CANNOT GUARANTEE THE DETECTION OF
ALCOHOLISM OR PARANOIA
ANALYTICAL SKILLS AND CERTAIN FORMS OF INTELLIGENCE
ARE BETTER LEFT TO OBJECTIVE TEST.
YOU CANNOT TRUST "CHEMISTRY" OR THE FACT
THEY FEEL LIKE A KINDRED SPIRIT.

EXERCISE: 1. Use the following force field analysis to add to what you believe to be true about interviews. Develop a group list on newsprint.. For each item on the list discuss why you believe an item to be true or not true. Decide what expectations are probably the most realistic. Why is it important to be clear about what an interview can tell you and what it can't tell you?

Things We Can Learn from Interviews	Things We Cannot Learn from Interviews

B. PROBLEMS WITH INTERVIEWS

Interviews are not usually good predictors of behavior in the workplace. We don't always select the best job applicant.

Why don't most interviews give us sound information?

Some of the problems researchers found:

(1) Interviewers jump to conclusions about interviewees

(2) There is no structure to interviews

(3) Questions aren't job related

(4) Interviewers weight negative information too heavily

(5) Interviewers don't remember accurately what the interviewee said

(6) There is a lack of standardized procedure for recording evaluations of those interviewed.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS WORKSHOP IS TO HELP YOU BE MORE EFFECTIVE IN USING INTERVIEWS .

SUCCESS IN INTERVIEWING REQUIRES KNOWING WHAT AND/OR WHOM YOU ARE LOOKING FOR.

Exercise: "FIND SOMEONE WHO..."

1. *The trainer hands out a list of five tasks to each participant.*
2. *Participants mill around the room interviewing each other until they can find someone who they believe has the skills and attitude to complete each task. Remember, one person may have more than one skill.*
3. *The activity ends when the list is complete.*
4. *Each participant picks one of their tasks and reports why they feel they found the right person to do the task.*

C. COMMON ERRORS IN INTERVIEWING

Despite the fact that interviews are used extensively, there are many questions their use.

1. Errors Due to the Questions Chosen

RELIABILITY	Do the interviews measure the same facts, the same way each time?
VALIDITY	Do the interviews measure what they say they measure?

EXERCISE:

1. *Review the following interview questions.*
2. *Is the question reliable? Why or why not?*
3. *Is the question valid? Why or why not?*
4. *Could these questions be rewritten so they were both reliable and valid?*

QUESTIONS	Reliability Yes/No	Validity Yes/No
A. How many years experience have you had?		
B. On a scale of 1 - 5, 5 being high how would you rate your performance in soldering?		
C. What interests you most about this position?		

Use the space below for any rewrites you would like to do.

C. COMMON ERRORS IN INTERVIEWING continued.

2. Errors Due to Interviewer Bias

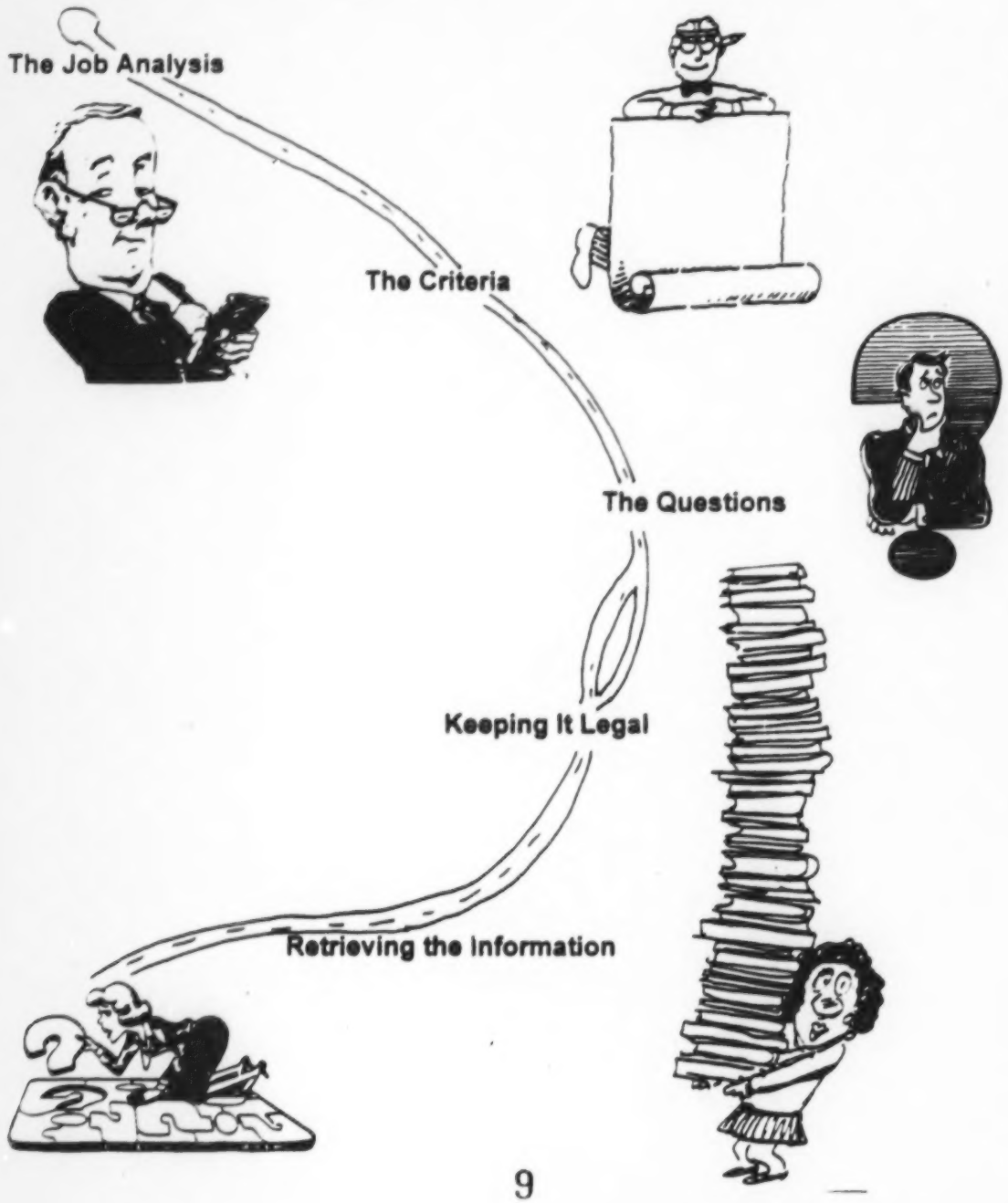
To a large extent, whether an interview can be useful in the selection process depends on how it is conducted and by whom. **Some interviewers show very high validity, others don't.** Here are some frequently committed errors we will try to avoid.

COMMON ERRORS	Explanation
First Impression Errors	Interviewer makes up his/her mind in first few minutes if applicant is o.k./not o.k. ignoring later information.
Contrast Errors	Applicant gets compared based on similarities/differences with person interviewing before them rather than against job requirements, getting rated too high or too low.
Similar-to-Me Errors	Interviewers give higher ratings to people like themselves in unrelated areas such as interests/hobbies, sex, religion, race, etc.
Misreading Non-Verbals	Interviewers give undue weight to how the applicant looks, sits, eye contact. May overlook competent candidates.
Sex and Attractiveness	Some view it as asset, others as liability. It doesn't guarantee anything.
Knowledge of Job/Company	Interviewer may not understand, or represent company or job well . Poor impression may discourage final acceptance of job by good candidate.
Interviewer's Mood	Good mood - interviewers tend to give higher ratings; bad mood - lower ratings. May also effect applicant's performance in interview

DISCUSSION: Have you seen any of these errors in action? It's just human nature! Can you identify some of the errors you feel most likely to make?

II. CONSTRUCTING EFFECTIVE INTERVIEWS

Now that we know some of the "pitfalls" of interviewing (problems and errors from the Introduction), we can concentrate on learning how to develop an effective interview. See the roadmap below



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A. THE JOB ANALYSIS

Interviews and questions are much easier to construct if you have sufficient information about the job and about the attributes of a successful employee in that job. One way to accomplish this is the **JOB ANALYSIS**.

Job analysis focuses on two parts:

	TASKS	PEOPLE
FOCUS	tasks/behaviors to create output	knowledge/skills needed to do job tasks/behaviors
DESCRIPTION	nature of work in order of importance	knowledge/attributes most critical to success
RESULTS	Job Description	Job Specification

The analysis of the vacant job may have been developed by your human resource department. It may need a review by the team, however, to be sure that the dimensions identified are still the most critical ones for the job.

Or, if your jobs "evolve" frequently, it may be appropriate for your team to develop a description and specifications for the empty position.

THE JOB ANALYSIS.
Generate ideas (brainstorming) of the important "dimensions" of the job. The following questions may help. Remember you are going for quantity not quality at this point.

a. What skills are needed now?
b. What skills were desired in the past, and how has that changed?
c How would we like to see the job changed now that a change is being made.
d. What are we assuming that we don't have to assume?
e. Would the "roof cave in": if the individual didn't do any of these?
f. What do we NOT KNOW about the position?

B. SETTING THE CRITERIA

After generating a list of dimensions of the job, the team selects the most important dimensions – usually no less than 4 and no more than 9. This should be a CONSENSUS DECISION. A number of the tasks, behaviors, skills, or knowledge identified may be grouped in a particular dimension such as TEAM PLAYER, WORK HISTORY, TECHNICAL SKILLS, LEADERSHIP, etc..(A page of sample dimensions follows.)

These dimensions serve as a CRITERIA for building questions, problems, or observations in the interview. You will be evaluating the applicant against this criteria.

SAMPLE JOB DIMENSIONS

EDUCATIONAL/TECHNICAL BACKGROUND
- Ability to read, write
- Ability to use a keyboard
- Able to add/subtract for own time sheets
- Mechanically inclined (able to work with, maintain machines)

PERSONAL QUALITIES
- Sense of humor
- Cost conscious
- Willingness to accept change
- Reliable
- Quality minded
- Positive attitude
- Compassion for others
- Motivated
- Ability to organize work area

TEAM PLAYER
- Ability to Listen
- Able to work with others
- Focused toward same goal

DECISION MAKER
- Ability to make decisions
- Good judgment
- Willing to take responsibility

PHYSICAL ATTRIBUTES
- Able to lift to a maximum 60-65 lbs (100 times a day)

EXERCISE: Write down four to six criteria statements you would use to evaluate the following:

1. An excellent employee

2. An excellent boss

3. An excellent team member

4. A good job at work

5. A satisfying and comfortable employment environment

C. DEVELOPING QUESTIONS

The Purpose

Interviews serve three purposes: giving information, getting information and solving problems. It is a two way communication process. The Interviewer is interested in evaluating how well the personal goals of each applicant matches the organization and to identify the top candidate for the positions. The interviewer is specifically interested in the candidate's:

1. ability to perform the job,
2. related education and training
3. work ethic
4. self-confidence
5. character, and
6. potential for further development within the company.

The applicant is interested in learning more about the company. The interview team may be the first people he or she has met face-to-face. The interviewers are the company and as such will be used by the applicant to evaluate whether this is a place the applicant wants to work. Opportunities should always be offered for the applicant to also ask questions. This is an additional opportunity to see the applicant in action.

DISCUSSION:

1. *As an interviewer what do you want to learn about the applicant?*
2. *As an applicant, what would you want to know about your company?*
3. *What might you be able to learn about the applicant, if they have questions to ask the team?*

Types of Questions

Questions stimulate the flow of information during an interview. Few people can successfully ad lib their way through an interview. Good questions are planned and revised over time. Basically there are two kinds of questions:

DIRECT QUESTIONS	Specific, factual answers requested that do not require in-depth thought.
INDIRECT QUESTIONS	Open-ended questions giving the applicant more opportunity to express his or her thoughts.

EXAMPLE: Direct: How long have you been an accountant?
Indirect What has been your most challenging experience as an accountant?

C. DEVELOPING QUESTIONS (continued)

EXERCISE: PRELIMINARY SCREENING FOR <u>YOUR</u> JOB.

1. *Write a brief description of your job. Include the major functions you do. Also identify the basic skills, aptitudes, and knowledge required. (This is your job description and job specifications).*

2. *You are being promoted. Assume you are in charge of screening initial applicants for your present job. Using the description above, identify the a). the minimal standards to qualify all applicants (minimum education, skill level, experience level, etc.) and b) the primary criteria each applicant will be evaluated against.*

3. *What initial information would you want to gather about these applicants? Construct some questions you might ask.*

4. *Break into small groups and share your answers. Give each other feedback. Is the criteria fair and appropriate to those who got eliminated? Is it legal?*

How useful is the information gathered? Does it tell the interviewer something important related to the job?

C. DEVELOPING QUESTIONS (continued)

Rephrasing

Indirect questions usually get more information than direct questions. In some cases, however, interviewers have to help the applicant along by asking additional questions to bring out the information.

EXERCISE:

The following questions got inadequate responses. How might they have been rephrased to get more information?

Question 1. Tell me about your experience in electronics.
Answer: I've been a counselor for five year in Seattle.

*Rephrased Question:*_____

_____

Question 2. Describe your most recent position.
Answer: I was an Electronic Technician II.

*Rephrased Questions:*_____

_____

Checklist

____ 1. All questions are related to the job being applied for.
____ 2. Only one question at a time is asked.
____ 3. Each question is developed to evaluate a specific criteria.
____ 4. There is a consensus regarding what the meaning of any rating scale used to evaluate applicants.
____ 5. If the response is not adequate (partial, not related), the question will be rephrased to allow the applicant to give a more adequate response.
____ 6. The selection and order of questions provides the best chance for the open exchange of information.

SAMPLE

COMMON INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Why are you considering leaving your present position?
2. What interests you most about this position?
3. What interests you least about this position?
4. What are some of your accomplishments in your present job?
5. What do you think you can do for us?
6. What do you consider to be three of your greatest strengths?
7. What do you consider your greatest weakness?
8. Tell me about the jobs you've had.
9. What are your long-range career goals?
10. What are your goals for the next five years?
11. Describe some risks you took in your last job; what were the results?
12. What kind of people do you like to work with the most?
13. How would your fellow workers describe you?
14. How have you helped reduce costs? increase profits?
15. If you could start your career over again, how would you change it?
16. What do you think it takes to be successful in the job you are applying for?
17. If you could design it, what would your ideal job be like?
18. Has there been conflict in your work place? How did you handle it?
19. Have you had any experience working on a team?
20. Describe a problem on your job and how you solved it.
21. What do you understand about the position you have applied for?
22. Is there any additional information you would like about position?
23. What do you know about our company?
24. Is there any additional information you would like to know?
25. Is there anything else we should know to help us evaluate your qualifications for the position you have applied for?

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D. KEEPING IT LEGAL

After conduction a job analysis, setting the criteria and developing the questions, a final step is required before you have finished constructing the interview. The questions must be screened to be sure they are legal.

> THE BASIC RULE: Only seek information that is essential to effectively evaluate a person's qualifications for employment. To do otherwise leaves the company open to charges of discrimination and possible law suits. It also creates a poor image for your company.

In fact, the interviewer should stop the applicant from providing discriminatory information on their own accord. YES, THIS IS A BIG RESPONSIBILITY. It is the law. Not knowing doesn't protect you or the company from legal liability. Take the time to review the guidelines. Remember that race, religion, sex, national origin, pregnancy, or disability (in some cases) are not grounds to keep individuals from qualifying for a job.

Following are some guidelines for specific situations:

Subject	Questions Not Allowed	Explanation
Race/Color	What is your race?	Avoid reference to race.
	Do you consider yourself a minority?	Stats gathered for affirmative action are voluntary after employment.
	Please attach a photograph	Photographs can be requested for identification purposes only after employment.
Religion	Can you work Saturday & Sundays?	Employers have obligation to accommodate religious beliefs unless this imposes undue hardship.
	What religion are you?	Religious affiliations, holidays observed cannot be used as hiring criteria. Nor can the hiring organization identify with a particular religion to screen applicants.
National Origin	What is your first language?	Inquiry into a person's mother tongue is illegal. Language questions regarding ability to speak, read or write foreign languages are O.K. IF job related.
	Can you speak fluent Spanish?	
	Where were your parents born?	National origin is not relevant.
	Do you have a green card?	Proof of citizenship or green card to prove eligibility to work in U.S. is presented at time of hire for everyone.

Sex/Marital Status/Family	What is your maiden name? What is your marital status? Do you have children? What kind of daycare have you arranged? Are you pregnant? What is the significance of the gold earring in your right ear, Rodney? What relative do we call in an emergency?	Keep the interview job related. Avoid comments related to gender. The pregnancy in employment Act prohibits discrimination based on pregnancy. Family status is not related to job competency. Sexual preference questions should be avoided. Asked only after hiring and should be worded, "what person do we contact in case of emergency."
Age	When did you graduate from college? How old are you?	The Age Discrimination in Employment Act prohibits discrimination on the basis of age (40 - 70). You can ask, "Are you of legal age to be allowed to work?"
Education	Did you attend parochial school? Did you graduate from high school?	Potential religious bias. Unlawful if it eliminates an otherwise qualified candidate.
Arrest/Conviction Record	Have you ever been arrested?	Innocent until proven guilty. You can only ask about convictions if doing so is job related.
Disability	Do you have a disability? Have you ever been treated for any of the following diseases?	Questions must relate to safe performance of the job. The Rehabilitation Act of the Americans with Disabilities Act state that reasonable accommodations must be made for disadvantaged groups.
Military Background	Did you ever serve in the armed forces? If so, what was your status at discharge?	The Vietnam Era Readjustment Assistance Act requires employers to employ and advance qualified disabled veterans. Less than honorable discharges sometimes are higher proportion for some groups.
Smoking	Do you smoke?	In 23 States it is illegal to refuse to hire or retain smokers. They can, however, ban smoking from the work site.
AIDS/HIV	Have you ever tested HIV?	Direct violation of the Americans with Disabilities Act and could violate state/federal civil-rights law.
Organizations/ Memberships	Are you a member of the KKK?	Probes into job related experience are acceptable, but don't inquire into religious or partisan groups.
Lawsuits	Have you ever filed a lawsuit against a former employer or a grievance?	Workers are protected by law from retaliation by present & future employers.

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E. RETRIEVING THE INFORMATION

Rating In fairness, every applicant deserves to be rated on the same criteria. It helps to ask at least the same core questions of each applicant. Use a combination of questions and open-ended statements. Between the two you should be able to evaluate task and people skills, and get some sense of the uniqueness of each individual.

Listening Every applicant also deserves to have you keep track of the interviews in a way that allows you to compare the quality of responses in an objective manner. Whether they are the first or last applicant, the interviewer needs to listen carefully and objectively record the information.

Recording Realistically, interviews tend to blur together and become more subjective with time. Applicants will pay attention if you are writing something down. They may misread the importance of the question. Try to use key words and fill in anecdotal material after the interview is finished. Leave yourself time between interviews to add comments to your notes.

Consensus for Consistency If the interview is by panel you will have agreed on the job analysis, selection of the criteria and questions before hand. MOST CRITICAL -- If you are setting up a rating scale (1 = low and 10 = high) be sure your 10 and my 10 translate into a description of the same skill or attribute. Does "An excellent communicator" mean the same thing to both of us? What about "average soldering skills" vs. "above average soldering skills?" Some people rank everyone consistently low or consistently high. (Just watch ice skating competitions!) This is far less damaging than the same interviewer changing interpretations mid-stream.

Following are some examples of rating scales used to help keep the interviews focused, the evaluation objective, and see that none of the information gets lost.

Information Retrieval Sample

QUESTION* (note criteria)	KEY POINTS TO RESPONSE	COMMENTS & OBSERVATIONS

Rating Form Sample

Position: _____ Interview # _____
Applicant _____ Date/Time_____
Interviewer _____Representing _____

RATINGS

CRITERIA: EDUCATIONAL/TECHNICAL BACKGROUND

	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
_____ No Info										
	High					**Average**				**Low**

Ability to read/write
Knowledge of keyboard
Mechanically inclined

Can't read/write
No exposure to keyboard
No mechanical aptitude

CRITERIA: PERSONAL QUALITIES

	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
Info										
	High					**Average**				**Low**

Flexible
Reliable
Positive attitude, motivated

Unwilling to change
Unreliable
Poor attitude

CRITERIA: TEAM PLAYER

	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
_____ No Info										
	High					**Average**				**Low**

Good listening skills
Ability to work with others

Poor listening skills
Uncooperative

CRITERIA: DECISION MAKING

	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
_____ No Info										
	High					**Average**				**Low**

Willing to accept responsibility
Uses excellent judgement

Not accountable
Makes poor decisions

CRITERIA: PHYSICAL ATTRIBUTES

	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
_____ No Info										
	High					**Average**				**Low**

Good condition
Able to tolerate dust, temperatures

Poor physical condition
No tolerance for conditions

OVERALL RATING:

	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
_____ No Info										
	High					**Average**				**Low**

Rating Summary Sample

Position:_____ Interview # _____

Applicant _____ Date_____

Rating Summary

Criteria	Raters					Consensus	Remarks
	A	B	C	D	E		

1 List criteria and/or questions (by number) being rated down left column.
2 Fill in rating given this individual by each interviewers on the panel.
3 Interview panel comes to consensus on rating.
4 Extraordinary strengths or weaknesses noted.
5 A sheet is done for each applicant interviewed.
6 The candidates are then ranked by cumulative score. Discussion and consensus follows on strongest candidate for job resulting in recommendation for hiring.
7 Other summary sections that could be added: Comments, Disposition, Strengths, Weaknesses.

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Information Retrieval Sample

QUESTION* (note criteria)	KEY POINTS TO RESPONSE	COMMENTS & OBSERVATIONS

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- Some job dimensions may weigh ore heavily than others
- Final rating is arrived at before discussion the next candidate.

REVIEWING THE APPLICATION

Identify incomplete or confusing information	Items left blank may indicate lack of concern for detail or an attempt to hide information
Organizations, job categories, etc. you are not familiar with	Check if it has bearing on applicant's qualifications for the job
Preferences listed that are not part of job you are hiring for	If preference if for different job, why is the applicant applying for this one?
Incomplete information such as zip codes, telephone numbers	May indicate inability to follow directions, lack of attention to detail or attempt to hid information
Salary requirements too low or high	Underqualified or potential dissatisfaction long term
Gap in work/educational history or many brief periods of employment	May indicate demotions, lay offs, firings or inability to stick through learning curve
Inadequate statements - too sparse or wordy	May be indication of intelligence level or personality. May indicate laziness, lack of interest.
Neatness	If neat, indicates methodical, detail-oriented individual. If sloppy, could indicate impatience with detail, lack of interest. Erasures/cross outs indicate anxiety, frustration, doubt.
Reasons for leaving past positions	"Disagree with boss" or "personal reasons" may mask firing or demotion.

IV. GUIDELINES FOR AN EFFECTIVE INTERVIEW

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE INTERVIEWER

Using a Vocabulary That Is Easily Understood	Using words to impress may be as much a barrier as jargon or slang. This is not effective communication.
Saying What You Mean	Tone of voice, audibility, facial expression should be consistent with what is said. Don't send double messages; it creates discomfort or distrust. The message should be, "We are interested in you and want to hear what you have to say."
Balancing Process & Task	Put yourself in the applicant's shoes. Get the job done but be sure applicant is at ease and gets to actively participate.
Keeping an Open Mind	No two people are alike. If the applicant has a different point of view than you on an issue, respect it and refrain from expressing your personal opinion on subjects not related to the task.
Being Prepared	Do your homework. It will show if you don't. Have an interview plan, review the applications/resumes, etc. and know what your role is.
Listening Actively	If you don't the applicant may shut down and you may miss hiring a good employee. Take time to go in depth if it will bring out important information about the applicant.
Providing Appropriate Feed back	Clarify anything that confuses you or if you hear uncertainty in the applicant's voice. Use non-judgmental language and tone of voice.
Minimizing Environmental Stress	Reduce stress by not sitting behind a desk (or other barriers, greeting them with a smile/handshake, taking time for a little informal conversation to warm things up. Don't start into the "heavy" stuff until the applicant is comfortable.
Being Sensitive to Ethical Issues	Confidentiality should be assured and honored. If information is used, anonymity should be offered. Hold the interview panel to both standards.
Encouraging the Applicant to Talk	If you are getting yes, no, or short answers, rephrase the questions to encourage the applicant to more completely represent their views.
Being Aware of Legal Issues	You, not the applicant are responsible for knowing what's legal to ask in interviews. Keep it job related.

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DISCUSSION: Choose one of the following statements to discuss. Do you agree? If so, how can your company improve its process of hiring through team interviews?

As the structure of the interview increases so does its validity.

Interviewing is a skill that can be learned and apparently improved with training.